

## Study Questions for SHJ

### Humanistic Judaism, Winter 2017

#### "Are You a Jew? Who Decides?" by Rabbi Miriam Jerris

1. As a Humanistic Jew, how do you discuss "Jewishness" with more conservative (Conservative, Orthodox, Reform, Reconstructionist) religious Jews? What about with non-Jews?
2. Humanistic Judaism welcomes and adopts former non-Jews who identify with Jewish culture. Do you regard this as a way forward not only for Humanistic Judaism, but for Judaism as a whole, taken in its broadest context? If you were asked about this by someone from outside Humanistic Judaism, how would you respond?

#### "History Lessons" by Rabbi Jeffrey Falick

1. How do you really feel about Hanukkah?
2. "Touching base" with Jewish celebrations and ceremonies is a key way Humanistic Judaism integrates Jewish history and traditional culture into Jewish life today. Does it matter that the historical record does not match up with the stories behind many Jewish traditions? Is the "legend" the point? Or is it more important to understand the reality of the past, with eyes open, to better appreciate Jewish responses to events in the past and in our own time?

#### "Open for Debate: Taking Seriously the Second Half of the First Amendment" by Jeff Lipkes

1. It seems Voltaire never actually said that he disagreed entirely with what someone said but would defend to the death the right to say it. Many people seem to think that they should have freedoms they would willingly deny others. Antisemitism has been revitalized, partly through people exploiting their freedoms, seeking to deny Jewish people and supporters of Israel the rights they demand for themselves.

These are complex problems, and they won't go away without thoughtful action. How do you respond to attacks on Jewish institutions and people, including those using "freedom of speech and the press and right of assembly" as weapons? If there are attacks in your community, how do you think they should be dealt with?

2. Do you agree with the article's author that anti-Zionism is a cover for antisemitism? How would you explain Jews who are anti-Zionist and/or anti-Israel? What would you say to such Jews?
3. What do antisemites think? Are the history of antisemitism and stories of individual antisemites important topics for us to study?

#### "Community News: Heroes"

1. Humanistic Jewish communities identify and honor heroes that mean something to them. Sometimes the heroes are members of local communities; sometimes they are more widely known. If you took part in selecting a hero for your community, did you feel involved, and that your input mattered? What did you think was really good about the process? What would you do to improve it?
2. Each year, the Society for Humanistic Judaism identifies and honors an individual from the past or present who represents the values and attitudes of Humanistic Judaism, and names that person a Humanistic Jewish Role Model for that year. Would you like to see more of this? How do you think this could be organized?